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PP RUEHWEB

DE RUEHJMA #0575 0871203
ZNY CCCCC ZZH ZUI RUEWMCE2280 0871201
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FM AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 0000
INFO ARAB ISRAELI COLLECTIVE
RHEHNSC/WHITE HOUSE NSC

C O N F I D E N T I A L JERUSALEM 000575

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

NEA FOR FRONT OFFICE; NEA/IPA FOR
WILLIAMS/SHAMPAINE/BELGRADE; NSC FOR ABRAMS/DORAN/WATERS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/27/2017
TAGS: PREL KWBG PBTS KHUM KPAL IS
SUBJECT: WAQF DIRECTOR HAS RESERVATIONS ABOUT UNESCO
MUGHRABI GATE REPORT

REF: A. JERUSALEM 489
 1B. JERUSALEM 443
 1C. JERUSALEM 291

CLASSIFIED BY: CONSUL GENERAL JAKE WALLES, PER REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D)

11. (C) WAQF DIRECTOR AZZAM AL-KHATIB TOLD POLOFF MARCH 27
THAT HE HAS RESERVATIONS ABOUT THE UNESCO REPORT RELEASED ON
THE EXCAVATIONS AT THE MUGHRABI GATE RAMP. THE REPORT,
RELEASED MARCH 13, RECOMMENDS THAT THE GOI IMMEDIATELY CEASE
ALL ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATIONS AT THE SITE AND DEFINE A PLAN
TO RESTORE THE RAMP WITHOUT ANY CHANGES TO ITS STRUCTURE OR
SHAPE. THE REPORT GOES ON TO RECOMMEND THAT ANY FUTURE WORK
BE IN CONSULTATION WITH THE WAQF AND BE SUPERVISED BY A TEAM
OF EXPERTS FROM UNESCO. AL-KHATIB SAID THAT WHILE HE WELCOMES
THE RECOMMENDATION TO HALT ALL WORK AT THE SITE, HE REMAINS
UNWILLING TO PARTICIPATE IN ANY JOINT WORK WITH ISRAELIS AT
THE RAMP.

12. (C) AL-KHATIB SAID THAT THE WAQF, AS THE SOLE CUSTODIAN OF
THE HARAM A-SHARIF, IS WILLING TO RESTORE AND RENOVATE THE
MUGHRABI GATE RAMP AND IS ALSO WILLING TO HAVE UNESCO
OBSERVERS PRESENT WHILE THE WORK IS BEING PERFORMED. HE SAID,
HOWEVER, THE WAQF OPPOSES BUILDING A NEW RAMP OR UNDERTAKING
ANY CONSTRUCTION THAT "VIOLATES THE STATUS QUO" AT THE SITE.
WALLES